Assessing User Preferences for Government Information

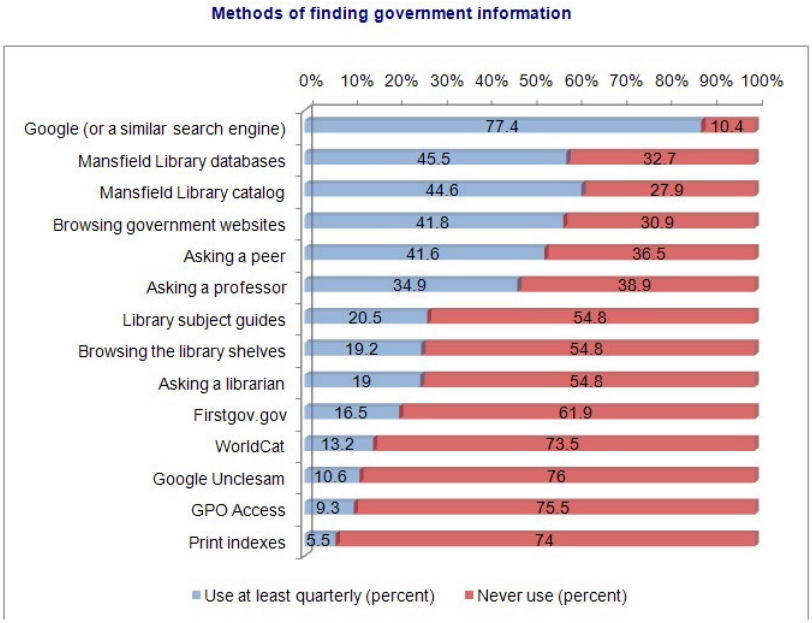
Jennie Burroughs
University of Montana

Why Assess?

Services Requested by Survey Respondents

Service Requested	Percent of Cases
Web-based tutorials	52.60%
Notification of newly available government documents	43.35%
Library training on specific subjects (e.g., Census materials)	36.99%
Government information subject guides or handouts	34.68%
Virtual reference	34.10%
Library instruction sessions on government documents	31.21%
One-on-one research consultations	26.59%
Government documents blog	22.54%

WHY ASSESS?



SURVEYS ON A SHOESTRING

Initial Steps

- What do you want to know and why?
- Is there preexising data you can use?
- If you need to conduct your own survey, consider:
  - Do you want to compare your data to existing data?
  - Is there a road-tested questionnaire you can use?
  - Who do you want to survey that you don't currently reach?

13. Have you heard of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP)?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

Survey Design and Implementation

- Short and sweet
- Who will you survey and how?
  - Target audience
  - Random sample or all interested users
- What format?
  - Paper or digital
  - Leveraging local licenses
- Institutional review and pre-testing

Survey Design and Implementation cont.

- When?
  - No-conflict time
- Advertising & reminding
- Survey incentives
- Privacy issues
- Analyze your results

2. How often do you use government information in your research (information searching)? (Please choose one)

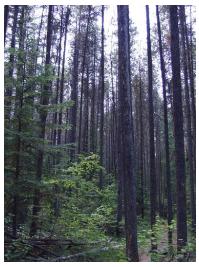
- ❑ Daily
- ❑ Weekly
- ❑ Monthly
- ❑ Quarterly
- ❑ Rarely
- ❑ Never

Use your Data

Where this example data comes from

- Spring 2006 Survey on University of Montana campus
  - 1,265 surveys distributed
  - 225 respondents
  - Overall response rate of 17.79%
  - Undergraduate student rate: 15.47%
  - Graduate student rate: 14.38%
  - Faculty rate: 18.87%
  - Staff rate: 21.97%

Cataloging or Digitization Priorities



Top 10 Agencies/Sources

1. State Government Sources
2. Local Government Sources
3. Forest Service
4. Congress
5. National Park Service
6. Fish & Wildlife Service
7. Health & Human Services
8. Census Bureau
9. Department of Education
10. Environmental Protection Agency

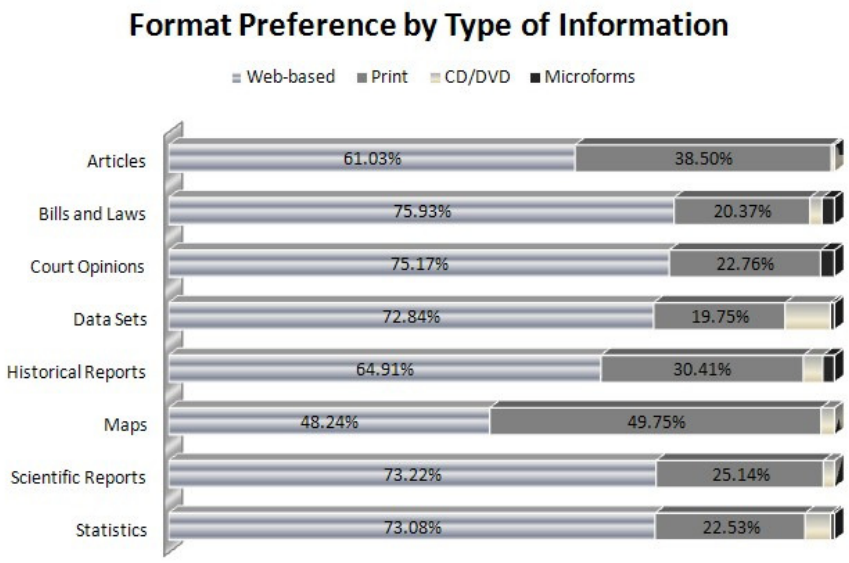
How Researchers Hear About Government Information

Source	Percent of Cases
Websites	**71.89%**
Newspaper stories	**71.43%**
Peers	**63.59%**
Scholarly sources/journals	56.68%
Newsletters	30.88%
Blogs	10.14%
RSS feeds	3.23%
None	**3.23%**

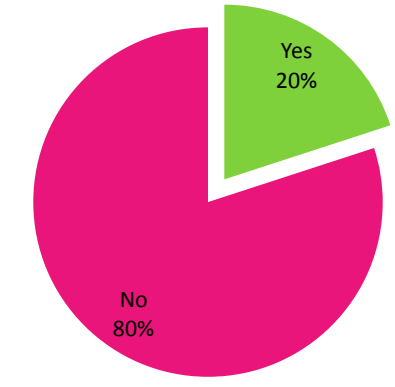
Preferred Alerting Methods Chosen by Respondents

Method	Percent of Cases
Websites	**50.47%**
Email alerts	**40.19%**
Newsletters	29.91%
In-person library sessions	14.02%
Podcasts	11.21%
Blogs	10.75%
RSS feeds	8.88%
None of these	22.43%

Making Buying or Retention Decisions



Are you now, or have you ever been, aware of the FDLP?



Have you heard of the FDLP?

THANK YOU!
Questions?